SAARC Summit

*126. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian delegation led by the Prime Minister participated in the 13th SAARC Summit held on 12th November, 2005 in Dhaka;

(b) if so, the detail of discussions/outcome of decisions taken at the said meeting;

(c) whether the Indian delegation put forward before the SAARC meeting any specific suggestions; and

(d) if so, the reaction of member nations to India's suggestion for a united bid to combat terrorism with "zero tolerance" towards cross-border terror?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Indian delegation led by the Prime Minister participated in the Thirteenth SAARC Summit held on November 12-13, 2005 in Dhaka.

The Summit had an exhaustive agenda. India participated actively in the deliberations at Dhaka and the Summit Declaration incorporates many of the new proposals made by India. The outcome of the Summit is in consonance with India's objectives and provides new opportunities to further the process of regional economic integration in South Asia.

India had taken a strong initiative which ensured the entry of Afghanistan as a new member of SAARC. With Afghanistan's entry, SAARC would acquire a more complete regional identity.

The Summit noted the renewed interest of other regional and international organizations, bodies and entities to cooperate with SAARC in fields of mutual interest. India has welcomed the interest shown by China as well as Japan to be associated with SAARC as observers, and would welcome similar association with other interested countries as well. It has been agreed that the SAARC Council of Ministers will decide the modalities in this regard.

The Summit was notable for the signing of three very important trade facilitation agreements namely:

* The Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters

* The Agreement on the Establishment of SAARC Arbitration Council

* The Limited Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters.

India's offer for hosting the SAARC Centre for Disaster Management and Preparedness has been accepted by the Summit. The extensive loss of life and property due to natural disasters such as the Tsunami and earthquakes, which affected the region during the past one year, led to the clear recognition of the need for a permanent regional response mechanism and India's record and demonstrated capabilities led to acceptance of our proposal to host the Centre in India, closely associated with the National Institute for Disaster Management in Delhi.

India has long argued that if South Asia is to become a dynamic component of the larger process of regional cooperation and globalization that is taken place in the world, it must first bring about economic integration amongst the member countries, as an essential pre-requisite. In this context, India offered, on a reciprocal basis, transit facilities to all countries of the region and also greater air connectivity through a virtual open skies arrangement. India took the lead in favour of there being no delay in the operationalisation of the SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Area) Agreement.

The proposal made by India for setting up a South Asia University as a centre of excellence was welcomed.

The Summit has also noted other important proposals made by India, such as the setting up a Regional Food Bank, establishing a SAARC Museum of Textiles and Handicrafts, a Regional Tele-Medicine Network, and the holding of a SAARC Car Rally.

A major theme at the Summit was cooperation in counter terrorism. There is a strong condemnation of terrorism in the Summit Declaration and a renewed commitment to eliminate this scourge. For the first time, there is also a clear reference to avoiding double standards in tackling this challenge. This is a major achievement of the Summit, and is in line with India's own foreign policy objectives.

श्री दारा सिंह: महोदय, मेरे क्वेश्चन का उत्तर तो मिल गया है, बहुत बढ़िया है। लेकिन उसमें एक लास्ट लाईन है जिसको मैं पढ़कर सुनाता हूं जो मेरी समझ में नहीं आई है। उसके बारे में मुझे जानकारी चाहिए। यह मेरा क्वेश्चन सार्क शिखर सम्मेलन के बारे में है जो ढाका में हुआ था।

श्री सभापति: आपका जैसा शरीर है बुलन्द आवाज में क्वेश्चन आना चाहिए, लोग समझ ही नहीं पा रहे हैं।

श्री दारा सिंह: महोदय, यह मेरा कसूर नहीं है, माइक का कसूर है।....(व्यवधान) सर, जो लास्ट पैरा है–

"A major theme at the Summit was cooperation in counter terrorism. There is a strong condemnation of terrorism in the Summit Declaration and a renewed commitment to eliminate this scourge. For the first time, there is also a clear reference to avoiding double standards in tackling this challenge. This is a major achievement of the Summit, and is in line with India's own foreign policy objectives."

सर, मुझे एक लाइन समझ में नहीं आई, "There is also ...

श्री सभापति: समझ में नहीं आई, तो उसे छोड़ दीजिए।

श्री दारा सिंह: सर, मुझे क्लेरिफिकेशन चाहिए, "There is also a clear reference to avoiding double standards in tackling this challenge." सर, डबल स्टैंडर्ड किसका है, यह मैं जानना चाहता हूं।

श्री सभापति: ठीक है।

श्री दारा सिंह: क्या इसका उत्तर मिल सकता है? ..(व्यवधान)..

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, a major theme at the SAARC Summit was the cooperation in counter terrorism. It may be noted that there is a very strong condemnation of terrorism in the Summit Declaration — if the hon. Member will look into the Declaration, he will be able to understand it—- and a renewed commitment to eliminate this scourge both from the region as well as from the world. It should also be eliminated from the region for which all the Member-States should cooperate, and, for the first time, there is also a clear reference to avoiding double standards in tackling this collective challenge. This is not only just speaking that all the countries should join together but also in making a collective effort to eliminate this scourge. This is what exactly is meant. I would also rate that this is a major achievement of the Summit. Anyway, Sir, you have given me the permission to make a statement which I am going to do, and at that time, all these issues can be addressed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you making a statement on this subject?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Yes, Sir, on this subject.

श्री दारा सिंह: सर, ठीक है। हम स्टेटमेंट पढ़ लेंगे।

श्री सभापति: हां, पढ़ लीजिए।

श्री दारा सिंह: सर, जब स्टेटमेंट आयेगी, तो पढ़ लेंगे, लेकिन यह एरिया की शांति के लिए बहुत बढ़िया है। क्वेश्चन में जो डबल स्टैंडर्ड वाली बात थी, वह क्लीयर तो अभी भी नहीं हुई है कि डबल स्टैंडर्ड किसने किया है? फिर भी, स्टेटमेंट आयेगी, तो हम पढ़ लेंगे।

श्री सभापति: मंत्री जी की स्टेटमेंट आ रही है, उस पर चर्चा कर लेंगे। आज आप स्टेटमेंट देंगे?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, I have to make a statement here today before the rising of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Today?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Yes, Sir, today.

डा० कर्ण सिंह: सर, यह आज के आर्डर पेपर में है।

श्री सभापति: ठीक है। नेक्स्ट क्वेश्चन 127

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI: Sir, I wanted to ask one small question. ...(*Interruptions*)..

श्री सभापति: मंत्री जी की स्टेटमेंट आ रही है। उस समय मैं अलाऊ कर दूंगा।

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI: Sir, let me put a question. ...(*Interruptions*)... Sir, let me have the opportunity to put a small question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No; now I have called the next question. ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री दत्ता मेघे: सर, क्वेश्चन नम्बर 127 ... (व्यवधान)...

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI: Sir, I have not been ... ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री दत्ता मेघे: सर, क्वेश्चन नम्बर 127 ...(व्यवधान)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please. ...(*Interruptions*)... Please take your seat. ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री दत्ता मेघे: सर, क्वेश्चन नम्बर 127 ... (व्यवधान)...

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI: Sir, this is not fair. This is the only opportunity we get to ask questions. ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री सभापति: उनकी स्टेटमेंट आ रही है, आप जो क्वेश्चन पूछना चाहते हैं, वह पूछ लीजिएगा। ...(व्यवधान)...

श्री दिनेश त्रिवेदी: सर, स्टेटमेंट के पहले भी तो इसके ऊपर क्वेश्चन आ सकता है। ...(व्यवधान)...

श्री दत्ता मेघे: सर, क्वेश्चन नम्बर 127 को सुना जाये। ...(व्यवधान)...

श्री सभापति: आप मेरी बात तो सुन लीजिए। ...(व्यवधान)...

श्री दिनेश त्रिवेदी: सर, मेरा छोटा-सा सवाल है। ...*(Interruptions)*... Sir, it is a very important question.

श्री सभापति: अच्छा, पूछ लीजिए।

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI: Sir, all I want to ask is, the entire world today is gettng divided into economic zones, and we are very fortunate to have a Prime Minister who not only understands economics, but he is an expert also. Sir, we have a bloc in European Union, we have a bloc in ASEAN and in America. India has, Sir, emerged as a great democracy and a great economic power. Sir, my question is, to enhance the regional integration of South Asia, is there any consideration or a proposal, because India can take the initiative of having a bloc like the European Union where we will have, if not one document for travel, atleast, one currency in the entire region? Is there any such proposal?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, in the answer that I have given, almost all the matters have been mentioned.There must be an integration of the economies of these countries.

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI: Sir, I am asking about one uniform currency ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, take your seat...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI: Sir, I am talking about one uniform currency such as that in the European Union...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, all efforts are leading to what the hon. Member has stated...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: That question is over; next question, 127.